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Transcription

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Tape 1, Side 1
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I: --1995. This is Anastasia Condas and we're going to interview Epaminondas Panagopoulos, Professor Emeritus of History at San Jose State University. Nondas was one of the most distinguished soldiers, the most decorated soldiers of Greece during the Second World War. He was—fought at the Albanian front and he was wounded there. We're going to talk to him today about his experiences. Nondas, let's start with how you were commissioned as an officer.

EP: In Greece, everybody who graduated from the university of Athens or from the University of Salonica has to go to a military school for reserve officers. So I passed through the examination and they send me to a middle school in Corfu. Corfu is a migration place and I don't know if you have your mind in military exercise or in beauty of nature. This is one thing.

I: And how long were you there?

EP: I was there nine months. Then, we had to stop—we had to adapt our training because the Italians had attacked in the meantime the Albanians and we were afraid that they were going to attach Corfu. So we had to make preparations, to prepare the island for defense, and so on.

I: When was this Nondas?

EP: In 1939.

I: Okay. And what happened after you stopped your military training to prepare for defense?

EP: Well then they send us to regiments and—according to our grade in the course of the school- and so the first man and the first student came to Athens and went to the First Regiment, the second to the Second Regiment, the third to the Thirty-Fourth. I was in the Third and I went to the Thirty-fourth Regiment and I was there. And I went with the Thirty-fourth Regiment directly from there to the front. Because in the meantime, the Italians attacked Greece, and attacked northern Greece, and we had to stop them there. And so we went there.

I: And exactly where was the front, Nondas?

EP: It was north of Ioannina. North of Ioannina. And what is now Epirus, was Epirus. Yes.

I: What time of year was it?

EP: October. October second as I remember it. Twenty-eighth. October twenty-eighth

I: And how long were you there?

EP: Then we stayed there, in the first land, just in order to finish our mission there. And from there, we have to move to various places and from there, they send us to various other places. In the meantime, I was wounded.

I: Now what was your mission, when you first went there?

EP: Well, when we—It was to recapture the mountains, which we already had, once upon a time. But out of underestimation of the situation, we abandoned them and we went down to the foothills. The Italians were very smart, very good. They weren't very captured again the hills. So we had to go back and attack the hills and take them back.

I: And how long did that take you?

EP: Well, about a week or less than a week. Almost a week. Yes.

I: Can you tell me anything about how your regiment was equipped?

EP: Well, it was not ve—In present day's standards, they were not well-equipped. We had weapons, rifles, that belonged to the first civil war. We had other weapons like LeBelle and other French weapons, which had been abolished there from the army. But we found them there so we took them. We used them. And until we find the opportunity to replace them. And then it was—it wasn't very well-equipped. But there was very high morale of the soldiers and of the officers and the people who were in the vicinity, let's say. Who—They used to live there.

I: And how did they show that? How do you know?

EP: Oh. They used to come, sit by the fire. They used to greet us with tobacco. It was a time when we used to smoke. Yes <*laughs*>.They used to come, to give us—to treat us. To give us courage, to tell us that it doesn't make any difference in how difficult it is now, but we are next to you. And so, it was very moving. The whole thing, it was very good.

I: So did you finally retake those three hills, those three mountains?

EP: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. Hundreds and hundreds of Italian prisoners there. And that was a very big result of this attack there. Also, the fact that we had now very important positions from which we could somehow check the enemy. It was very important there. So it was good from this point of view.

I: Did you move on after that?

EP: No. In this specific location, we did not make any progress more. And the funny thing, personally—this is a personal thing—that my father in 1912 fought right there in Tepelenē, in a vineyard, and location called Tepelenē. He fought there and they captured the area. And we were not able to recapture it, to do the same thing that my father's colleagues did during this time, capture this village.

I: Why couldn't you capture it?

EP: Well, we had to stay there and wait until the other troops would come and attack them. And that was—WE were moved to the south, to the north, to other areas.

I: And what was the plan?

EP: Well, the plan was to stop them in the first place, and I never found out why some of our generals did not or, I don't know, the general staff or something did not want to advance there. We had the ability to go ahead and capture Vlorë and defeat them totally, let's say. But they didn't want this kind of total defeat. I don't know why. They had something in their mind. <*pause*> But you have to obey orders there.

I: How did it come about, Nondas, that you were wounded? How long had you been fighting?

EP: That was, that was—Well, one of these battles lasted for three days. During the third day, we came very close to the Italians. Actually, my team there was about thirty to fifty meters away from the first line of the Italians. The Italians—this is very important because the Italians were extremely good engineers. They could fortify their position very well, every time, every time. Sometimes we used to sleep, they in their own area and we in our own and we used to get up in the morning and we used to find a fortified area on the Italian side and we were naked without anything. Because in the night, we slept. We did not work. The Italians worked all night long. So from this point of view, they were very goodly and very dangerous, you know.

I: We started with your being based near the village that your father had captured. And then, where is this in—

EP: This is a little further ahead of Tepelenē. It is to the northwest from our position. I always thought that we are going to go there and take a picture, the vanity. Or take a picture and send it to my father. <*laughs*> But I did not manage to do something like this.

I: How did it happen that you were wounded, Nondas?

EP: Oh yes. We were—The third day of our attack, we came very close. Actually, we were about thirty in the first line if you go up to put our soldiers in one line, the first line was about thirty meters away from the Italians. The Italians had wonderful big heavy machine guns. Machine guns of positions, we say, based on three <πουράκια-cigarillos? 112>. But they are very good because they can aim well there. So there was a guy who had ruined, he had killed a number of our soldiers and I saw them falling down one after another and I cried. I had to do something, but I could not really. I wasn't in a place where I could see him very well. But anyway, I tried to hit him. And finally, finally, I came to an opening and then, he was in a position to fight against me.

I: And how were you armed?

EP: Oohh. I was, I was—I had a revolver this time. So he shoot me. And he shot me. And I felt something. I felt something like burning. Actually he hit me with a bullet. The bullet passed through my chest and went behind. It came out—It came in, in between the fourth and the fifth ribs and it came out by the ninth rib. And when it comes out, it makes a bigger whole so it is easier to find out where you were hit. I was—I wanted to find out if I was hit, really <*pause*> and where. So I—I tried to put my hand behind, but I—I had gloves in one hand, the other hand, they had taken my glove. I don't know why. The soldier, he took my—very strange—κασκολ <*scarf {140}*> How? How do we say?

I: Your scarf?

EP: Yes, a scarf and--

I: Your helmet?

EP: My helmet, no. Because he had realized somehow too heavy for him so he didn't take the helmet. He took—but he took my sweater. He managed to pull it out.

I: Now we're talking about a soldier on your side? One of yours.

EP: Soldier of my side! But he was from Palairos. It was an opportunity for him to get some clothing <*laughs*>. I'll tell you about him. He is a longer story. And so <*pause*> I put the—not—where the upper part of my hand to my back and it was sticky and <*pause*> I realized that I was wounded because this had to be blood. And I saw it and I think "Thank God" because this guy was thirty meters away. From thirty meters the bullet had to be without my gloves hitting me did not have time to acquire microbes and so on. So I was lucky. I was lucky. So that was my first impression. But pretty soon, pretty soon I fainted. Sort of. Kind of something that came with the wound. And it was ten o'clock in the morning. I know this thing because I looked at my watch during this time. It said ten o'clock, it's early. So that was it. The others, they used to scream, "Oh, help us!" and, "We are wounded and sore and can't move." But I could not, I could not. Of course, it was

nothing worth talk. And I stayed like this. The only thing which I did instinctively was to take snow and eat it. And as soon as the doctor later on told us, that was something that contributed very much to my, let's say to my health, and

I: To your ability to survive?

EP: Ability to survive, yes. Because somehow it was the thing that I had to do. I had to find something cold to put inside. Where? Here? And stop especially the blood. The bleeding.

I: Were you able to be helped by your fellow soldiers or by a medic?

EP: No. No.

I: Why was that?

EP: They were—Each one was busy to defend himself. They could not, they could not during this time, but—

I: So you were alone?

EP: Yes, they—My soldiers were είσαι σκορπισμένοι <*being scattered {185}*>

I: They were scattered.

EP: Scattered, yes. They were scattered all over. And then what happened was two or three of my soldiers passed by there and said, "Captain do you hear us? We're going back. We are going back. And if we reach them, we'll tell them you are wounded here." So I said, "Okay." But you could not talk there. The truth is that the soldiers were worried and they went back. It was about 2 kilometers upwards, you know? And it was difficult—the snow—and it was difficult to—
<*to someone in another room*> Josie, you want something?
<*to interviewer*> And so we could not, we could not—These soldiers had a very hard time to reach our first, *our* first line, which was about 2, 000 meters high. But they did. And they said, "You know Panagopoulos is wounded. Help him. He's dying and you will have to go there right away." And so on. And that was very important. Without this news which they brought to them, they could never come to me and save me after some <*unintelligible {205}*>. So anyway, after some—It was about, I don't know, probably about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, they came down toward me, and they will find out if I was alive and so on. In the meantime, this fellow who stole nearly everything I had movable, he told them all sorts of lies about himself and about everybody else and finally, finally he tried to go to climb a kind of small hill there and he was exposed for a moment to the fire of the same Italian who had the machine gun and he was firing. And he fired him in his back part of his body, A line there with bullets, like this. So he was very lucky because he knew during this moment that they will send him to Athens to a

good hospital and he will go away from this…say…sort of hell. He left. And when he went to Athens, he was the one who announced to people that I was wounded because they didn't know if I was alive or if I was dead, especially my parents did not know. My mother used to go every day to the various hospitals in Athens and she asked about us—about our regiment and so on, but she could not find any concrete information. Finally, she found somebody who knew me, who had me as a captain there. And it was very important. But he said to my mother, "Mrs. Panagopoulos, please you'd better send your husband here because I am tired; I cannot talk very much and I can talk with few things, few words I can explain to your husband what happened."
My mother realized that the news were not—was not good, so she asked my father to go to the hospital, and then he told him, stupid idiot, he told to my father that, "I'm terribly sorry," he said, "but your son is dead. He was killed in front of my eyes, and I am the one who closed his eyes." And the truth is really he closed my eyes because as I was sitting there, I was, I had- I was in a coma. But I could understand what happened around me. And then he said that, he said, "Good-bye. Good-bye." He closed my eyes, he left.

I: After he had taken your sweater and some other things.

EP: After. After this. But the worst thing in the world was that he deprived me of a view. Because the Italians and the Greeks had a kind of duel between the artillery. And all the time, the shells were passing over my head from where we were. <*makes sound of shells flying overhead*> All the time. And also, the view of the side of the mountain there. And as he closed my eyes, I could not open them. I could not see. It was terrible, really terrible. And <*laughs*> I wanted to find him afterwards and I could fix him but I didn't find him in person afterwards.

I: Did he live?

EP: He- Yes, yes, yes. Because they somehow managed to patch him. <*laughs*>

I: What did happen to you, Nondas, after your men found you?

EP: Well, then they went there and back I had one friend whom I had sort of under my protection. His mother had asked me to take him under my protection and take care of him so that nothing will happen to him, and I was now wounded and he had to take care of me. So he was a champion in <*pause*> wrestling. So they came, this one and other soldiers of course, very good, came down because we were down and about 2, 000 meters away from the furthest line to get down. So it was very dramatic the way they came because as I was lying there, suddenly I hear a voice, "Nonda! Nonda!" And I found the strength, in a condition where I could not talk I thought, and I answered! I said, "Yes!" So they said, "We are here!" <*Greek name {294}*>, a champion of wrestling and my soldier, another soldier, very good soldier.

I: Their names? <*pause*> You don't remember.

EP: <*whispers*> I don't remember. I feel ashamed, but I don't remember.

I: Δεν πειράζω <*never mind {300}*>

EP: Eh πειράζω < *I mind {300}*> <*laughs*> They say, "Can you come to us? We cannot come to you. Because they're firing and we'll be killed." I said, "Okay." "Stay there," I say. So I wanted to be sure they would stay there. And then I started going toward them.

I: Could you actually walk?

EP: Nooo. Sliding, sliding. Have you seen how some kids, when they are in the snow, they take their overcoat and they take it between their legs and they pull it up and they use them like a carriage or something? Something like this. So I used at the beginning, but this didn't work very well. So I went about a hundred feet, two hundred feet, maybe, and then the oaks—We have wide oak bushes up there. And not big trees oak, bushes of oaks πουρνάρια <*holly {320}*>. These were scratching my back. They were scratching my clothes, they pushed them back and they were scratching my flesh up. So I said, "I'm killing myself. So I'd better change the system." So I put my head first down and the legs up and I started pulling the soil and the tops of the bushes and going down to my friends. And I went, I went very well. And after some time, I was close to them. So they came there and they lift me up. The wrestler took me under the hands—he took me <*pause*> μασχάλες <*armpits {335}*>

I: Under the arms?

EP: Under the arms, yes. And for him, it was easy to pull me out. And the other soldier took my hand and he pulled me. And they said, "Now we are going to walk out of it, but we'll climb there." So we started, 2,000, 2,000 meters. It's, after this condition, for me it was a very, very big distance, this thing. So anyway, we arrive there and we arrived almost at the position which we occupied before we started the attack, you know. A position that hid a kind of <*pause*>. They had opened a kind of ενά <*λακκούβα-hole in the ground? {350}*>, an opening.

I: A ditch.

EP: A ditch, a ditch. And they were there and this had become a kind of ορμώ <βολή? *rush shot? {353}*> as we say in Greek. A position where from we shoot <*pause*> something like shells. Big shells. It's a terrible, terrible weapon. We used to fire the Italians now, who were under where we were there.

I: Was it a large artillery weapon? Like a cannon?

EP: No. No it was not artillery. It was less than artillery, but more than a rifle. Or machine gun or something.

I: Was it a bazooka?

EP: No, no. Bazooka was for tanks or things like this. I'll probably remember, I'll probably remember. <*pause*> Are we through?

I: No. No.

EP: Doesn't make any difference to me. So anyway the thing is that there, they thought, "Wait here. Wait here." And I said, "I'll wait." "For the doctor," they said. But we didn't have doctors there. Doctors of the regiment, doctors of the army, we didn't have. But there was one soldier, one soldier, who—Thank God—was characterized by the Metaxas Dictatorship as leftist, who was a graduate student of the medical school. Excellent, excellent. Remedes. Fathom Remedes. Yes. He came. He said, "Hey Nonda! Will you show me?" Right away, he was so, so happy <*unintelligible {387}*>Fathom. Απλό <*simple {388}*> Finally, his name: Fathom. <*laughs*> So, "Και <*in Greek {389-395}*>.

I: So he reassured you.

EP: Yeah. <*laughs*> I knew that he was overoptimistic <*laughs*> so I said, "Thank you very much. Now can you examine me." "This is what I'm going to do," he said. So right away he came and he examined me really well and he found that I needed something—I needed a hospital or something.

I: Now how much time had passed from the time you were hit.

EP: From the time that- It started the--

I: You said about ten o'clock.

EP: Ten o'clock. It was there. No, but it was about <*pause*> 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, something like this.

I: In the afternoon.

EP: In the afternoon. Well anyway. And that was it.

I: Okay, let's stop there and then we'll continue. See what we got.

<t*ape cuts off {417}*>

Tape 1, Side B
Counter: 000

I: Well, Nondas. Shall we try again. Let's see if this is gonna work. We talked about the medals. And we talked about how you were-

EP: <*laughs*> The medal, the medal

I: And then we talked about how your friend came and he gave you <otoseptil? *{003}*>.

EP: <*unintelligible {003}*> He gave me, I took them. We started walking and my friend stopped.

<*tape turned off by interviewer*>

I: Nondas, you said that <*unintelligible {007}*> was like penicillin.

EP: Yes, it was used during this time for other diseases, also ferocious, terrible diseases, but not—We didn't have during this time the penicillin. The penicillin was invented when I was in the hospital. And Thank God it was invented. And I took quantities of this.

I: And you said your friend had gotten them as samples.

EP: Yes.

I: When he was a student.

EP: The various pharmaceutical companies sent to the doctors. And this friend of mine was a doctor and they sent him the sample, samples of this medicine. And he himself thought it was very good. And it was very good. So I took it and I put it in my pocket. The same night, and quite late, we arrived in this, Picar, in this village of, of um.

I: <*whispers*> Albania

EP: Albania.

I: But the one friend had stopped and went back because he was hit at the elbow. What happened to him?

EP: He died.

I: How did he die?

EP: He died because he froze. Because of the cold. He was frozen. He was, how we can say, that was it.

I: You said he had gone back and he had seen a friend of his who gave him some cognac.

EP: Some cognac. He drank the cognac, he became dizzy. He was unable to walk from there on and he told us, "Continue walking and I'll reach you in a few minutes." And we continue walking and that was <*trails off*>. <*quietly*> Well, that's it. So.

I: So you got to the village that night?

EP: Yes. We- We- on the outskirts of the village, we found a house which was,- had been bombed by the Italians and there was only the chimney left there, so this soldier of mine was strong enough, with his friend, with the other soldier, that they collect, they picked up a lot of wood. The <*pause*>

I: They wanted to build a fire in the fireplace that was left.

EP: A fire, a fire. Exactly. The fire. Yeah, so και αυτό, και, πάρετε τα έξω τα παράθυρα <*and that, and, they got out the windows {037}*>.

I: Oh, they took the shutters and those cells.

EP: Yes and they collected other ones. So we had wood during this night and afterwards, my soldier, my soldier was able to find into the ruins of this house, this bunkhouse, some tea, mountain tea, as they say. Wild tea. And he made some tea. He made for me, and for the other two, and so we had something to put in our mouth. Nothing else to eat, *nothing* for days. There we didn't have absolutely nothing. Yes. So we set, we set the tent there for me, because the officers had a tent they can put, like the boy scouts, you know exactly, you go in with your head and come out with your legs. And then I took a good installment of this medicine and it seems that I felt well there and I slept all night long, all night long. Until the morning. Then all day, we spent in this house there. And I told the two soldiers to search for more tea or anything they could find edible. So they did this. And this is the way we spent two or three more days in this house. And finally the fourth day, I think, some soldiers of my regiment came, passed by there, by the house where we were sleeping, let's say, and they were going back to the bases of the regiment. Sometime <*pause*> They had to walk for, for about half a kilometer or something. And they were- They had been sent by the regiment to the, to the

Beata: He's getting tired.

EP: Somewhere in the back of our mountain where they could possibly find some food, especially bread. They did find bread and they had certain sacks full of bread and they were coming and coming back but they happen to meet some <*unintelligible {073}*> who are more hungry than our soldiers and they took their

bread. <*laughs*> They took their bread. They said they were left with nothing. Absolutely nothing. So that was the only hope for food for them.
You're not sitting very well.

I: I'm fine.

EP: Ε, ξερώ πλάτη σας πονάει<*I know your back hurts {076}*>

<*Everyone speaks over one another in Greek*>

I: Ποτέ θεματα <*Never an issue {378}*> When did you finally leave that area or did you stay longer?

EP: After some time, some other soldiers passed by there. And they were soldiers of my company. And they liked me very much. They liked me very much because I used to play flute, harmonica. The harmonica. Play to them and they were dancing, hasapiko <*a traditional Greek dance {084}*>. Yes. So they were so, so painfully surprised. Everybody, everybody was wounded there. There were so many wounded and dead there that there was nothing extraordinary. So I said, "Listen now." Excuse me, excuse me. I skip a phase, a very important phase. In the meantime, passed by there a team of officers and a medical doctor quite high in rank, and some other officers from the Third Regiment of Halkis <*unintelligible {094}*> They passed by there and he came there with- in a way that something, nothing important was taking place, and, that nothing important was taking place. But for me it was important—my life there. So he says, <*in Greek {098}*>. I said, "Captain, we are here. We have- I have- I am wounded. I was in this battle all these days and finally I was wounded and I have a bullet through my chest." "Ah" <*unintelligible {099}*> what do you want from me?" "I don't want anything from you. The only thing I want is a piece of paper, a piece of paper, which will arrive there that I am- I was wounded in action and I'm going back. I'm not a-a" How do you?

I: A deserter?

EP: A deserter. Yes. So he said, "Do you think this will make you well?" So I said, "This is not the point. The point is that I need this thing to pass." Because we have soldiers there who do not allow deserters to pass through. So he said that, "Well, nah" He said, "I cannot give you something because there's no use." And he turns, he turns around to a soldier who was making fun of the soldiers, he said, "People now are dying now with a wound in their finger and he is expecting to survive with a wound like this." I say, "I'll remember this doctor and pray to God that you are going to survive after meeting me next time. I hope we'll not meet again. But if we meet, you might have <*unintelligible {118}*>" It's the truth.

I: Είχε <He had- *unintelligible word* {119}>

EP: I never found him. I never- And I think that he probably died or disappeared. I never found him. I found his regiment, I found where he was, everything. But I never found him. It was terrible. People like him did much more harm than can imagine. So after this, these soldiers of mine passed by there, and I said, "Listen, men. I just have this tough luck to help the wrong or die first. And I have to go down to the foothill and take the car, any car that goes to Gjirokaster you know— And from there, to take me to Ioannina because I need to go to, εντάξη <okay {130}> I need to go to hospital. So and this is <*unintelligible {133}*>. So, they right away, they cut branches from trees and they put it like, they put a blanket it around.

I: They made a stretcher?

EP: And they made a stretcher. And they put me on top. The only trouble is that this was a downhill road and they were a lot, a lot of rocks that came, that just came above the small, above the green leaves and so on. And poor soldiers, they were holding on, but this was- I was heavy as lead, very heavy. And I was touching all the time to these stones and it was painful, really. Anyway, after some time, after some hours, I- we came down to this, to this, artillery base down that- Well, they were freight-freighter, πώς το λετέ <How you say?*{151}*> <*pause*>. The, the, the.

I: Describe it.

EP: Yes, it's <*unintelligible {154}*>. Of course, οι φορτηγοι στο λενέ <*the word for trucks {154}*>.

I: Trucks.

EP: Trunk.

I: Trucks.

EP: There was a big truck there that had just come and unloaded shells and it was going back to Gjirokaster. This is a very big town of, one of the best towns of Albania and this was captured by the Greeks: confiscated, sort of. And transformed into, for transportation, things like this, you know, so they used to work there. So they put me, this is a truck, doesn't have <*in Greek {167}*>.

I: Oh it doesn't have springs.

EP: Springs! Doesn't have springs. And so I had, in the Albanian roads, a really hard time, going approximately 100, 100 miles, something like this.

I: Now you were on your back the whole time they transported you.

EP: Yeah, but lying down.

I: Yeah, I know στον πλάτη <*on your back {173}*>.

EP: And we arrived in Gjirokaster and then we found, we found right away an ambulance, and I said my luck turn- started turning for the best. This, this ambulance had one, two beds here, three four, you see. So they put me to the right down to the lower uh

I: Level.

EP: Level. Yes. And that was how we're going to Ioannina. Just as we were going, suddenly, the one who was on the same level with me, he was- he started moaning. And you know, the people who die have this kind of voice. And you knew absolutely nothing, you cannot say anything, you cannot ask for anything, and you cannot do anything to-to, and moreover I could not move, I could not talk. Then, after some time, the guy on top level of my couch, how do you call this? His hands something happened and fell down and hop on my face. I tried to move it to the side, but I could not, The hand was always coming in front of my face. Anyway, we arrived. We arrived with all those things to Ioannina. Ioannina is higher than Gjirokaster and we had to discuss in the meantime, where are we going to go. I didn't have any certificate, any paper, any that you go there. So one soldier who was attached, let's say, like an ordinance, he said, "Mr. Captain <*in Greek {202}*> we'll try to find a hospital and we let you there and then we help you right away because they arrest us as uh.

I: Deserters.

EP: Deserters. A- What do they call them?

I: A-W-O-L.

EP: A-W-O-L. I said yes. We go to one hospital. This was an academy for teachers, which was made a hospital, so we went there and there was no room. They were all officers, all wounded. They were all there. They said, "No, we cannot take anyone." So from there we went to another one. Before we went to another one, I told, I told the driver, "Listen now. We'll go there. You let, you let the soldiers carry me in as much as possible, inside the hospital, and then you take the car and you leave. They're- Everybody else can go- They cannot come here because this is only for officers. You see, this hospital. Seek for another hospital there." They said, "Okay." So my soldier, he said, "I don't go anyplace," he said, "unless I see you in bed in the hospital." So I said, "You are very optimistic, but let's hope. Let them." Then they took me- They had a – <*in Greek {232}*>, who was a donor, a benefactor of an educational academy. Again an educational academy. So-

I: This is foreshadowing, Nondas.

EP: Yes. Excuse me.

I: You met the Cal professor.

EP: <*laughs*> So we were there and they, they let me in in the yard. There was a yard there, not covered, with, just an open air thing. They left me there and they left. My soldier, he went out, but he kept an eye. He was looking at me all the time. So I was there. So they came, the personnel of the hospital, and they say, "Where do you come?" I said, "Well I come from this- from the τομέας <*sector {248}*> from the section of Tepelenē in the last battle night I was wounded and I have a bullet in my chest. Everything was a mess. There I didn't have the opportunity to have any papers for you here and I hope that you arrange this thing. But you examine me," I say. "You have the doctors here" So then came a very fine doctor. General, not a specialist, you know, παθολόγος <pathologist*{258}*>.

I: Pathologist.

EP: Yeah, pathologist. He had this- you expect him first to die, and then to examine you, <*laughs*>

I: Oh, a coroner.

EP: Yes, something like this.

I: He was like a coroner.

EP; Yes, yes. But it was, it was very good. This doctor was excellent. Doctor Melanides <*check spelling {263}*>. He, he look at me and he said, "I'm coming. I'm coming in a second." He went, he brought the director of the hospital, whom I saw after the war, you know, and we had a reunion, really very moving. So he- he brought him here and he said, "<*unintelligible*>. Look at him here. What do you think is the matter with him?" Well, I think that he's very serious," he said, "that he has to be in a bed and he has to- he has to have a little bit more radical treatment because inside the whole thing is amothorax <*check spelling {276}*>. the whole, all the blood was- ran inside. It didn't run outside; I didn't have an opening. And the amothorax, it became pelothorax <*unintelligible {278}*> after some time, you know. And this is, you know, very serious, very serious. So, he says, "So for this reason he has to go up there. Now, what are we going to do, that we don't have bed?" So he was thinking, he was thinking. This, he was a doctor, the director of the hospital, but he was not as generals and others who are sick there and so he said, he said, "We have one, one Colonel who is sick of hemorrhoids, so we'll move him somewhere else and we'll put his bed somewhere- I don't know where. But I hope we'll find a place." So he went with some soldiers to a place which I came to know well and he said to the Colonel, he said, "I'm sorry," he said, "but we have to move you from here, to another place." He said that "I don't, I don't want to go to anyplace." "We don't want to do this

thing too," he said, " but we must. He's a young officer is here. He is very serious. We doubt it if he's going to survive, but we have to make every effort to save him, so please help us." So he said, "No, no." He started to scream, he said, "I order you!" He said, "Listen," he said, "colonel, you order, you order somewhere else, in another situation. Here I give the orders." (*laughs*) Yes. "And in a boat the captain gives the orders, but not you." So they took his whole bed, they carried it and they made the bed ready for me and then he came, this man, Zerbas <*check spelling {313}*> was his name, he came and he took me in his hands, and I was *heavy*.

I: In his arms.

EP: In his arms. In his arms. And he came three flights up and he put me up to- in the bed. I said, "My God," I said, "Doctor, you need to see a doctor now <*laughing*> after this exercise." And after this, one thing came, followed the other, until they made the operation, the first operation. They cutt one rib. You see, just to open and empty what was inside here, they did it. Imagine, they- they didn't have <*in Greek {327}*>, the instrument that cuts ribs, you see. It's a kind of, like a plier. They didn't have any. When they found it and they tried it, and they tried it on me, this thing broke. The doctor told me, "Be careful," he said, "Don't, don't move at all. Scream if you want, shout, swear if you want to, but don't move at all."

I: Did they have any anesthetic?

EP: Not the anesthetic. Nothing. Nothing at all. So they, they, they- I had a <*pause*>

I: Describe it.

EP: You know, it's something which produce a flame and they burned this thing, you see.

I: Oh, to sterilize it.

EP: They- To sterilize it. But it was not good sterilization; it was good for the circumstances there. So they did this and then they cut me, they got this thing and it was the first stage and from there on, they started <*unintelligible {348}*>. More operations.

I: Did they have to put a pump in?

EP: Yes. Well, not a pump. They have to put a pipe, like this, from there to have the thing to empty, empty, you see. And, horrible.

I: How long did you stay in that hospital?

EP: About three months, I think. And then, in the meantime, I had some friends. Friends who came to Picar where I was, up there, and they bombed the Italians. <*laughs*>

Beata: We're going somewhere, you have to stop.

<tape cuts off {360}>
<restarts {362}>

I: Nondas, shall we continue with the operation.

EP: Yes, well during the operation, my uncle wanted to come in the operation room, but they did not allow him and they kicked him out of the hospital because they didn't want any, any sentimental reactions of relatives.

I: How did he happen to be there, at the hospital?

EP: He took a special permission from the general of the army there and he came, he came to the hospital with special permission there.

I: And the hospital was where?

EP: The hospital was in Ioannina. Did I tell you earlier that the General Papagos came and visited us there? Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I thought that I said this thing. Well, one day, General Papagos, the Marshal Papagos—he was the top man of the army there—he came to the hospital and he could not visit all the heavily wounded officers but he wanted two or three, two at least. So the director of the hospital, he might as well bring him to our room there. We were two men. I was with this bullet through my chest and there was another guy who had a bullet through his *head*—very seriously. This guy, unfortunately, a very wonderful man, after some time, he committed suicide. Well, he had lost every hope. He thought that he could do anything in life and so he said, "What do I need this kind of life?" And so he committed suicide. Anyway, during this visit, Papagos came to me. Papagos, to talk to you, it was a very important thing. No one was talking with him during this. So he came to me and he said—<*tape cuts off*>

I: Try that now. See what Papagos said.

EP: Papagos said that he had heard about me, that I was a very brave officer, that I had rewarded with a lot of commendations. And he was very happy to meet me. And he was going to Athens. And because he had met my uncles, he asked me if I wanted to send a message, through Papagos, to my uncles, and through my uncles to my parents and tell them how am I. So, I thanked him very, very much about it, I said, but I, "Marshal, I'll tell you something: You are asking me questions as if I am going to die, but I'm not going to die. And I'm going to return to Athens and I'll see my parents." And that was our talk with Papagos.

I: Nondas, what happened after the operation?

EP: Well, everything went rather well, with pain of course. And I didn't know what to do because I was feeling the pain. I couldn't pretend that I was very brave and I could stand the pain of the operation.

I: No anesthetic.

EP: No anesthetics. We had only local anesthetics. Local for the shot only. Nothing else. And I was holding, I was holding the hand of a nurse and, who was not very elder, but she was about sixty years old probably, and she was telling me, "Hold me, hold me and squeeze me, do what you want, and scream if you want, but don't move. Don't move." So the operation went rightly. After some time it was over. When I came out of this ordeal, of the operation, the director of the hospital came there and he told me, "You have to be, Nonda, very proud, very proud, because we gave you, no because you had the first operation ever given to a human being." I said, "Wh-wh-what do you mean?" "Well the Lord made the first operation on man and this was when he got the rib of Adam and so you also have the same operation, so you are in a nice tradition." I said, "Doctor, you cheated me from this point of view, because the Lord gave- made the first operation to Adam and he cut the rib, but he gave him instead, he gave him a woman. Where is the woman?" <*laughs*> So he said, "It's nice you that reminded me because here she is." And there was a very beautiful nurse, you know, and she presented to me. He said, "Here, she's going to be your nurse from now on." I said, "Oh my gosh. Thank you very much." <*laughs*> And that was during the operation. Otherwise, nothing important happened. They had more trouble to take care of my uncle who had gone out of the hospital, but never- he lost his senses. <*in Greek {476}*>

I: Oh, he fainted?

EP: He fainted. Yes.

I: He fainted. This is when he'd just arrived?

EP: Yes, he had just arrived. He could not stand the screaming.

I: Oh, so he was there during the operation.

EP: Outside of the surgical room. You know.

I: Oh so he fainted outside of the surgical room.

EP: So they had to recover, revive him. So otherwise, everything was okay for some time. What else happened?

I: How long did you stay in Ioannina in this hospital?

EP: I stayed for about three months. Three months there. One thing that made life very, very colorful was the visit of the airmen of a Canadian squadron which was at the frontier. And he was helping the Greek army when they were fighting and they, they heard that in the hospital there was a guy who could speak English. And this guy was me. And my English was terrible, but nevertheless, I could talk with them, so they used to come, and they used to be like Santa Claus, loaded with all the good things you can imagine.

I: Such as?

EP: Such as, everything which I could not touch. Cigarettes, cigars, <*laughs*> beer. All sorts of things. Which, nevertheless, I appreciated this, and there were other soldiers and other officers to take- wounded there in other beds and they could- they were very willing to help me consume everything that the Canadians used to bring me. We had good time, we had good time. <*unintelligible {514}*>

I: You didn't have any trouble talking?

EP: Yet. Then after some time I stopped completely, talking. And I had notebooks, and I used to write all my- everything I wanted to say. And I had those notebooks until the, during the occupation, and then somehow they disappeared from our house. I don't know who took them, how we lost those. I don't know.

I: So how do you explain your not being able to talk after a point?

EP: I could not breathe, among other things.

I: And were you told not to talk, or couldn't you talk?

EP: I could not.

I: You could not.

EP: I could not, I could not talk. Well, that was the least of the things. I'm very talkative otherwise <*laughs*>. I was--

Tape 2, Side A
Counter: 000

I: -battle after-

EP: No, no I was not in a position to fight anymore.

I: Do you recall any time during the time when you were in battle that were particularly poignant and were something you remember?

EP: Well, well- going to the first line from the front there, I met, I saw a lot of people killed, but for the first time, I was active. I killed somebody. When an incident happened, we were 45 short of 45, behind a snow-- a world of snow. And we were staying there, watching the ravine that went down and suddenly I saw some Italians who were climbing the ravine and they were coming to our position there. So I waited for some time. I had to—I had to do something, to react against them. And so—So I took <*pause*> στόχος <*target {015}*>. I took target.

I: <*unintelligible {016}*>

EP: Yeah. One of them. And I shot him there. He fell. He rolled on the snow and I said, "My goodness. This is terrible." And then something—something pushed me, "Go and see if you can do something. Maybe he's not dead." Though I had all the time to take a good target, you know, with my gun there. So—

I: You mean to shoot somebody else?

EP: Yes, no. So I went down there and I found him and the poor guy had a—he was killed and dying, he had opened his wallet and the pictures came out. Some photographs came out. And it seems that he was a barber and he had a guitar. He was sitting outside of his barbershop and then another picture had a little kid, probably his own kid. And I felt terrible. And I said to him, "Why do we kill in the worst way than the SSO?" But anyway, this is the war. This is war. And so this is the first incident of killing a man and this shook me, really. After some time, there was another—another incident. A soldier of mine who was of Greek-American descent, named Carabinis, C-A-R-A-B-I-N-I-S, Carabinis. He came to me and he said, "I heard that you speak English and you have books, English books with you." I said, "Well, I don't have many English books, but I'll lend you the ones I can give you." I had a few, I said, "Pick up one. Which one you want?" And he picked up *Farewell to Arms,* of Hemingway. So he took the book and he continued. The next day, we had the big fight, where I had killed the Italian soldier and so <*pause*> after some time, I don't know how he removed his helmet, or something, and he was hit on his head and he was dead immediately. Immediately. <*unintelligible {049>}* quietly fired, I managed to go close to him, but it was too late. He was dead. And then I tried to take his things so that we can send them to his father, mother, to his family. And I—The first thing I found, it was *A Farewell to Arms*, of Hemingway. <*laughs*> What an irony. The whole thing. So that was something very, very bad for me. I became sick, completely sick from the point of view of morale, let's say. But it was one of those things. After some time, with the fear of the battle, and of the whole thing, you forget those—the incidents. But it was an important, important page, let's say. Not very significant, but important for me. Well, this is one—Other things, there were all—the whole series, the whole day after day, we had incidents like this. Many

incidents. And you cannot count them. You cannot count them. And after some time, thank God, you forget. That's it.

I: How long were you in battle before you were wounded?

EP: Well, in this battle, I was three days, at least. And we were—I was aproximately a month, to month. Before this. Very short time because we were the first one to against the Italians. The first soldiers sent to meet the Italians.

I: And what time of year was this? This was in the winter?

EP: October. We started October.

I: And there was snow all over the place.

EP: Yes, yes, yes.

I: And you were wounded?

EP: December.

I: You were wounded in December?

EP: Thirteenth.

I: And then when did you finally leave Ioannina and the hospital there?

EP: Oh. Much later. I can't remember now, but it was much later.

I: And from Ioannina, where did you go?

EP: From Ioannina, from the hospital? My uncle managed to—He had some contacts, some friends and so on, in the Officer's of—who were in the transportational work. So they took me in a bus, together with some other wounded officers, and they took us to a little town named Arta. From Arta, we took a boat and went to Athens. As we were going, we were hit by Italian airplanes, we were bombed. The Italians were very bad when they were using <*trails off, laughing*>. And so, they didn't hit us. But we with rifles, so we managed to hit them as they were passing over the boat, despite the fact that boats like ours, that is hospital boats, should not fire back. Should not fire at all.

I: Well, they shouldn't be fired upon.

EP: But we were fired, yes, a blitzkrieg. We were fired, so we fired. So the pilot and, I don't know who, the co-pilot, let's say, of this one airplane that was coming very close to our ship there were killed. And the airplane fell upside down in the sea, in

the ocean. That was, that was the first act of the whole thing. The second act was the ambition of the captain of our hospital ship which was hospital ship could not take part in any enterprise. His ambition was to take the boat and give it to the Greek army because we were short of airplanes.

I: Oh, take the airplane.

EP: The airplane. So looking at this airplane in the water, just like this, alone. So, we tied the whole thing and with the help of some soldiers there who jumped on the airplane and they were keeping the rope, and <*laughs*> we brought it to Piraeus. And as far as Piraeus, we'd go, when we were there, we came out and there were my relatives there and I saw the man who was responsible for the hospital. It was this time the hospital was the Red Cross Hospital. And so by this time, my brother was also in the same hospital, in the medical corp and it was arranged very fast to go directly to the hospital, but I could see my parents first. So I saw my mother, my grandfather came there, he was very proud. He said, "I knew it! I knew it<*laughing*>" he said. That was—

I: Was this the grandfather who was a priest?

EP: A priest, yes. <*laughs*>

I: How long did you spend at the Red Cross Hospital?

EP: Oh, a long time. The trouble with this kind of wound is that you have, for a long time, you have, you depend on the doctors and you have to go every so often. So I stayed for about six months in bed there and I had a lot of wonderful stories in the hospital there. I had, for instance, every evening, our room, our whole, how would you say, of wounded officers there was—It had to have a kind of massage before sleeping because from too too much lying down, we had it. And I just happened to have, as a nurse for the massage, Princess Irene <*laughs*>. That was the funniest thing of all. And I happened to be fresh from the army and I knew some good jokes <*laughs*> during this time, and I told her, I said, "I hope you don't mind if I tell you what happened <*laughs*> you know, in some case. Yeah, so she was laughing and laughing and laughing.

I: Was she there frequently?

EP: Oh, every day. Every day. Oh she was serving well.

I: Now was your brother a doctor yet?

EP: No—Yes, yes, yes, yes.

I: He was a doctor. So you've had real royalty?

EP: I had—and also his friends were famous, famous surgeons there: Professor Marcus, Professor <*Greek name {145}*>, who had already opperated on me, and several others. Now they are dead. Anyway, after some time, after some time, the doctor said, "We think that you'll profit very much if you manage to walk up to Mt. Pyrrhenees. It was fourteen, fourteen-hundred meters.

I: <*unintelligible {151}*>

EP: No. No, no, no, no, no. But we had friends who—

I: No, but could you walk around the hospital?

EP: Yes, in the hospital, yes.

I: So you could walk?

EP: Yes. Yes. They help me to go to the mountain, with a sort of a bus, I would say. A car, which was moving with—we used to call those cars "guzzlers" then. They used to burn everything you could imagine: cognac, ouzo. They used to burn, instead of gasoline. So I went to the Mountain, to the shelter of the Alpine Club, of which I was a member since I was 16 years old. And so I had a room up there. And so, it was fresh air, of course, in the middle of pine trees. It was quite wonderful. Very wonderful.

I: How did you live up there?

EP: Once a week my brother used to come on foot from Athens with a big sack on his back and climb the mountain up and bring us, and not only for me, for the others too. It was a terrible thing.

I: At what time did you do all these things?

EP: Oh well, it started late spring.

I: How long did it take them to go.

EP: <*pause*> Three hours, I think. Because he knew shortcuts.

I: Who packed the rucksack? Did he pack it or did your mother?

EP: <*laughs*> I don't know. But he was the one who was bringing me food because he was practicing the medical profession in the villages of Marathon and—pretty much Marathon and some other villages nearby there. And instead of money, they used to be paid with λαχανικά <*vegetables {171}*>, with vegetables. So he used to bring us. Well of course he could not bring us meat or something like this, but vegetables were acceptable. And what else? And of course, macaroni rizzi from

black market. Every family used to sell everything they had and <*pause*> In that setting, for instance, they sold every painting they had, all those things and also all the silver. Before the Germans and the Italians came to Greece, just to be prepared. And they made their stock, how do you say?

I: So how long were you up on the mountain?

EP: Oh, I stayed about a year. Yes. And we had all sorts of things. We had our concerts, we had our reviews, theatrical reviews. We had all sorts of <*pause*> media, let's say, to spend our time in a pleasant way.

I: So how did that happen? Were you all officers?

EP: Oh yes, yes. Some of them were soldiers.

I: How many of you were there?

EP: Oh, we were about fifty, at least. Yes.

I: So how did you get concerts? You didn't have your harmonica, did you?

EP: Oh, yes. I had my guitar, also, my violin. And one harmonica, yes. I was quite a factor, you know of the—to the enjoyment, let's say, to the entertainment of the sort. Yes, I think it was a wonderful, wonderful group of people during this time. And Greek-American girl. I didn't know, I never thought to put down her name, her address, where from she was coming. Suddenly, because I didn't have in mind that I would come to America. Never, never, never. I never thought that I would be able to come to America. And she was there, she was. And we were friends and were singing together.

I: But why was she up there?

EP: She had, I think, a cousin or something and she was taking care of him. Something like this.

I: And what was happening in Athens at this time?

EP: Ooh, it was terrible, terrible. They had, the Germans had come. They had taken all the schools, all the places where people could stay, like the κατασκηνώσεις <*camps {213}*>, the-

I: Camps?

EP: Camps, the children camps for the summer. Which were very important for the health of the kids there after, after the occupation as well. They didn't help of course for food. That was the most important thing. And it was one of the periods

where you could admire the ingenuity of the Greeks, let's say. Where they used to find ways to survive.

I: Can you give some examples?

EP: I cannot remember now. With the exception of the little kids, let's say, who used to steal, really, bread of the German soldiers from big <*in Greek {226}*> How?

I: Supply?

EP: <*laughs*> This is funny. From their <*pause*> building places of Germans, especially. The Italians were rather difficult for the little kids to be victimized.

I: Why?

EP: Because they are very smart <*laughs*>. They are like the Greeks, so they know how the Greeks <*laughing*> operate in case like this.

I: Were you ever afraid that the Germans would come up to the mountain?

EP: Yes, several times. Several times. We were afraid, but they didn't come up. They didn't come up. Fortunately. I don't know why. I asked again and again and again why the Germans didn't raid the mountain. Why they raided all the villages below the top of the mountain. But maybe they had some, some way to come in contact with the Greeks that stay with, with the top German officers and so on. Some way, I mean like, like <*pause*> the regent, Damaskinos <the Archbishop of Athens {246}>, who was quite, quite a clergyman, you know. And he would come in contact with the Germans. He used to go and talk with them, "Don't do this, don't do that." And they listened to him sometimes because they were also smart sometimes. They didn't want to somehow <*pause*> <*unintelligible {257}*> or something like this the other people, the people of Greece, you see.

I: Had you, and the soldiers on the mountain, any qualms as to what you would do if the Germans came in?

EP: We do, right away, where we go. It happened once when a collaborator, a general as a matter of fact, who happened to collaborate with Germans, who came up to there and he had a kind of bodyguards. A small bodyguard with him. And we had to, to protect ourselves, and we knew exactly where we'll go and what we are going to do and so on. It was a lost cause to fight there, but we had to fight. It was one of those things.

I: Were you prepared? Did you have weapons?

EP: Well, the weapons were taken by the Germans when they came in. But still we could find. We could find weapons.

I: Did you have your own weapons?

EP: Not there, not there. At home I had, I think. Yes, my mother used to keep it always. <*laughs*>

I: So what happened with this German corporal who came?

EP: Well, at the beginning, we didn't know what to do. What to, how to, to treat him, so—

I: Were his bodyguards Greeks or Germans?

EP: They were <*unintelligible {278-279}*>. And they were fanatic. Yes. So we went, as a body of, a few of us, we went there, we say, "Hello, <*unintelligible {282}*>, my name is so-and-so and so-and-so." We introduce ourselves and we say, "We are all wounded in the ward. So we are out of the fight, out of everything else. But we are here for therapy and we hope that we get well and we go back to our homes" and so on. "You tell us what you want from us. We can help you if we can." So he gave us a speech, a patriotic speech. "We know how brave you are" and so. But nothing else. Otherwise we were very, very careful not to provoke anything and not to have any friction with him. Yes.

I: How long did he stay?

EP: He stayed about a month. It was the climate was very good, you see. The climate was beautiful. Absolutely beautiful.

I: Why do you think he was up there?

EP: Well, I think he was—He didn't want to stay probably in the army of the collaborators who were together with the Germans. We have—We had a lot of them. The <*pause*> How you used to call the? They were Tagmata <Tagmata Asfalias {299}>. The Battalions of Security, we used to call them. Yes. They were horrible. They were horrible people without, not without feelings, without any, any, any, anything to believe in, you know?

I: What was their function?

EP: Oh, to help the Germans carry weapons. And if they had weapons, they had food. You know, during this time. They could go to a village, they could blackmail them and "Either you risk so much in <*unintelligible {313}*> or in money, or we are going to burn the village." Things like this.

I: And this was for the benefit of the Germans?

EP: The benefit of the Germans, yes. And their own benefit. Yes.

I: Were there many of those, security forces?

EP: There were, there were—approximately three battalions, that is, more than thirty thousand men. And they were in various-various places in Greece, not <*unintelligible {323}*>. They were in Peloponnesus, so they did a lot of horrible things.

I: Were there ever recriminations against these people?

EP: Well, in certain cases. Certain cases, yes. So they killed some of the collaborators, as they used to call them. But no trial or something spectacular happened.

<*tape turned off {332}*>

I: Nondas, what happened after you came down from the mountain?

EP: Well, after some time, I started coming in contact with the old friends, and in the meantime, Americans started coming into, in the country. They were a people of the OSS, which was, the OSS was the <*pause*> the army, let's say, before the CIA there. They were intelligence, but of the army. And these were older members of the Athens College, which was the American College in Greece, and where I had served before. I was working, once upon a time, before I went to the army, and so I saw them again and suddenly the former president of the college, Homer Davis, who is now dead, he asked me if I could work for the USIS, the United States Information Service, which was <*pause*> an agency working for the press, supplying the press, the Greek press, with the news from the United States, but it were world news. For all over the world, you know. I said to the—I, for a long time, for some time, I told him that I could not work. I didn't have the power, the strength to work. And but Homer Davis insisted. He said, "Nondas, I want you to be there." So I said, "Well alright. Thank you very much for the honor and your trust." And so I became the head of the Greek personnel of the United States Information Service. This was a branch, actually, of the United States Embassy in Athens. So some of us, some of the people there, used to work for the Embassy. So after some time, this became a very respectable, very, very important agency, the whole thing. And it used to supply, to supply all the press, the Greek press, with news from all over the world. So, it was a regular life, somehow, without any other excitement and <*pause*> Something else appeared in the middle, during the period when I came down, and before even, when I, before I, I went to the front. I was in the army, but I was not sent in the front, let's say, in Albania there. I had, Homer Davis had asked me if I wanted to be a kind, to take care, to keep an eye, let's say, on two kids, two brothers. Their parents were of Greek descent, but they were in America, so they were in Chicago. And they were, they could not come to Greece. They were cut off, during this time, because of the war. It was a dangerous thing to cross the Atlantic during this time. So

Homer Davis said, "If you can, that would be a very good thing, to help this poor father who lives in agony without having anyone to take care of these two kids." And so, I said, "Well thank you very much. I will do this." I asked my mother, as a matter of fact, because she had to carry part of the burden of the <*pause*> of the care, let's say, of the kids.

I: How old were they?

EP: They were about fourteen years old, the older, and twelve years old the younger. Smart and good kids. So I really took care of them, every time when I was free from the army, I could spend time with them. Take them, show them the important places of Athens. Speak to them about what was going on and so on. I did what I could during this time. And then came the moment when the kids could go back to the United States because liberty ships and other supply ships started coming from the United States to Greece, and then they left empty for the United States, so they could take some passengers. So during this time, the father of the children said, "Why don't you send Nondas with them here? He wants to come and study here in America." I said, "Oh my goodness, I do want to come and study and get a doctorate in America." So Homer Davis took it very, very, very much in his heart, this whole thing for me to go, come to the United States. And he-there were opportunity, there were some other guys, Greek students, about seven of them, who were coming here to the United States, so he said, "Do you want to go with them?" I said, "Yes, I will." To go to Chicago. In Chicago, it was this man who was waiting for me, the father of the two children.

I: What was his name?

EP: Vasilopoulos. So we were in the—I cannot remember how many days it took us. It was an empty liberty ship, and really it was-- we had also a very rough sea, very rough. President Truman was just elected and I remember this thing very well, during this time, because the year was 1947 and I was 46, I think. Yes, 46. And Truman was asked by the Coast Guard to return back to Washington. He was on a trip. On a trip, enjoyment trip, kind of entertainment, and he was asked to come back because it was this bad tempest, great sea, would have very bad sea. So, we had a terrible time. The sea was very rough. The captain of our liberty ship was seasick, and he was in his cabin. We could not go from one part of the ship to another. Altogether, it was a bad trip. It was not one of those that you remember. Or either you remember because it was so bad.

I: What were the accommodations like?

EP: Aah. <*laughing*> Almost nothing, almost nothing. But <*unintelligible {500}*>. So finally we get to New York and then we had to stay three days, for three days in front of the liberty ship, liberty, Statue of Liberty. Yes. Because it was a Labor

Day. And so nothing was working. You know, we celebrated the Labor Day right there.

I: Did you have to stay on board the ship?

EP: Aboard the ship, yes. Yes. We could not go off. And finally we went out and we had—I can say that my first conduct with the United States was a good. It was during this period, there was—they had the beauty contest in Atlantic City, the <*in Greek {518}*>. And in the meantime, my old buddies who were also all journalists had come. <*pause*> Had—were already in America and they were, they were receiving me, let's say. They welcomed me in America, and they want to have this kind of nice welcome. And <*speaking at the same time*>

I: <*speaking at the same time*> What bar did they take you to? <*laughs*>

EP: They took me to the—to Atlantic City, there was a very big hotel. And of course spectacular, inside there was quite impressive, very impressive, especially if you come after this kind of adventure of Greece. So we had a good time. From there, I took the train and I came to Chicago.

I: On to Chicago.

EP: Well, at the beginning in Chicago, I had a wonderful time. For about three days. The honeymoon lasted three days only. In the meantime, during those three days, I worked with the University of Chicago and I met my advisor, and I saw where I'll go and so on. But nothing had been arranged about my, about my, where I'm going to, to sleep. Or what I'm going to do, how I'm going to survive in Chicago, a very big city. Anyway, finally the people who brought me here explained to me that they could not help me, so I was alone there. Something else happened that was against my own ideas, let's say—

<*tape cuts off*>

Tape 2, Side B
Counter: {000}

I: What happened in Chicago that was against your own ideas?

EP: Well <*pause*> they proposed to me one solution: to marry a nice girl. And I did meet a very nice girl, which they introduced me to her, as a matter of fact. I didn't know any other people, girls, here, or the boys. Nothing. So they—they put the <*unintelligible {005}*> One solution was marriage. And I could study, I could do what I wanted. I could work, you know, in this. But I didn't like the idea, the whole thing. And then they pointed out that they were not responsible for my staying here. And they left me as I was, alone. So I went to the University of Chicago, to the advisor of foreign students and I explained to him the situation, and he said, "Don't worry. Don't worry at all because this is a situation which has

been repeated again and again, with many other students" and so on. But the others are smart people and they married the girl and they stayed married. I said, "I don—I cannot marry a girl when I don't know the girl. I we lived through an occupation, we lived through a war, we lived through completely different situations. How can I get-- victimize, let's say, a woman who has completely different experiences from me?" So I said I cannot do this thing. What I wan—I said to the University that what I want is if I can work somewhere and *earn* my, some money which are needed, at the beginning at least. They helped me, from the University, very much. Very much. They found for me a room in the international house. That was extremely civilized and very good. So I stayed there. And I had to work. I worked in cafeteria there, temporarily, until I would find a better job. I didn't know that a better job would be again a kind of restaurant <*laughs*> but nevermind. It was alright. So I started working there and I registered in three courses and I followed these three courses. In the meantime, there was a fellowship and a scholarship at the University of Chicago of students who were, who had very high grades, straight As. And we were not that many, in my class, as I saw there, who were straight A's. So I had many hopes that I'm going to get it. The fellowship was, all my expenses actually for whole year. For a whole year. And the scholarship was all the money I needed, my tuition and so on, also for the whole year. So we were two students finally, who were competing, sort of. But good luck helped me and the professor saw that I was-- <*laughs*> I feel embarrassed saying that I was a good, good battle, say, good risk for them, so I took it. Then my whole life started becoming different. I worked in many other jobs also, despite the fact that I had the scholarship and the fellowship and so on, because I had to, to <*pause*> save some money for next year. So I started working in a factory, the Hot Point factory of the South Side, south?, or West Side in Chicago. That was a fine story. I make up <*unintelligible {049}*> I used to love music, very much. And I used to go to go to the symphony orchestra. Always. <*pause*> To attend the concerts. We had—After some time, I realized that I could not spend so much money for this. And we had a program there that we could go to attend the rehearsal of the symphony instead of going to the final, the final performance. So the rehearsal's excellent. Excellent and much better—I prefer to hear a concert for, as a rehearsal because the conductor remarks, and analyzes, and says a lot of things there. And so I had those things. During this time, together with me, it happened in the same, in the same, seats, side by side, there was a young lady who was also working for her doctorate but not in history. She was working for her doctorate in business administration, so we were talking about music and that was all. When, in the meantime, I started working in the Hot Point factory, and when I went there they said, "What do you know? What is your skill," let's say. I said, "Nothing." "Nothing," I said. "I have—I am an immigrant, immigrant. And I come here and that's all. I am like this. You are going to teach me and I'm going to do it. I am quite smart kid. I can understand," I said. Well, they were alright for some time. And they were satisfied, as a matter of fact. But after some time, somebody came there, a kind of inspector and so on, and <*pauses*> and he asked me again how much schooling I had. I said nothing at all. "Why don't you work in the school?" I said, "Well, I don't want school, I want to

work. I need to work." And then at the same time, the girl I knew came into the factory and she saw me there. And she asked the supervisor there, she said "What this man is doing here?" So he said, "Well he is a worker, he is an immigrant, and we have him here as an oiler." So she said, "He's an immigrant? He's a student! He gets his doctorate at the University and you have him here" "Aahh," they said. Right away he sent a memo to the office, let's say, there, and they fired me for saying lies. I said, "Listen mister, I didn't want to say lies. I wanted to make an honest job and I did it and I showed it to you." He said, "No, no, no, no. You didn't tell us the truth." So I went, I said, "All I need is a few more friends like you to help me," <*laughs*> I told the girl, "And then I will go back to Greece." So anyway, she went there and she said, she made a big fuss. Because in the meantime, she was very important in the factory herself, you know. And that was all a thing that somehow signified my separation from the factory, the industry. I said, Well I better do what my competitors are out doing, you know the Greeks. So I found—I was working, as a matter of fact, on 63rd Street, and there was a man who was the owner of a restaurant in, in the <*pause*> How do you say? In the subway-

I: That's the L, isn't it?

EP: Excuse me?

I: The L?

EP: The L, exactly. And that was a good restaurant. A very good restaurant. And I say, <*tape cuts off {107}*>

I: What happened in the restaurant?

EP: Then I ask him, "How much I will be paid? How much?" I say, "I am not greedy, I don't want to make money out of all this job, but I want collect money, to save money, for the summer because then I'm not going to be here and I have to—to have some money. So, altogether, I found out that I'm going to make every week $35. Thirty-five dollars. For the whole week. Then I said, "Well this is not a good job."

I: Was it being a waiter?

EP: No, it was not a waiter. It was a <*pause*> cashier, A cashier, yes. So, I thank him very much for his kindness to give me the job, I said, but this is not the job I need. What I need a job give me some more money to have for my studies. So he said, "Okay." So I said, "Well, let me think about it as a matter of fact before we say the final word." So I went back to the alma mater, <*laughs*> the University of Chicago and there I saw, accidentally, I met, I met a very famous professor, who I also used to find very often in every symphony concert. We always used to meet there. He said, "How are you Nondas?" I said, "Not so well." So I told him the

story. He said, “Listen, do you want to be a waiter?” I said, “Yes, I would love to. I’d love to.” He said, “Why?” Because I get some money and get my food. And this is very important. He said—He wrote a card to somebody and he said, “Go with this to <*pause*>” <frustrated sound> stupid idiot.

I: Nondas, where was the place? The place was-

EP: The place was downtown.

I: It was a Jewish place?

EP: A Jewish club, yes. The richest Jewish club in Chicago, but one of the richest of the whole, wide world, you know. So this professor, Professor Garten, very famous historian, gave me this card. He said, “Go to this man and give this card. And he knows what to do.” So he called him, in the meantime. So I did go right away, you know. And I went there and I said, “This Professor Garten has sent me here for an opening.” And he said, “Oh, yes. He called me. He called me, yes. It’s okay.” So he sent me to another one, who happened to be Greek, <*laughing*> as a matter of fact, in this <*pause*> I forget the name of the club. This is stupid.

I: Δεν πειράζει <*never mind {147}*>.

EP: Πειράζει. Θα Θυμηθώ <Nevermind. I will remember {148}>. So they showed me, they said, “There are various degrees of job here. You can be a waiter in the big dining room. You can be a waiter of a private room, of private room.” This place better, much better. “Or you can be waiter to something, to a special occasion: wedding, anniversary, birthday party or something like this. What do you want?” “Well,” I said, “What is the system here?” He said, “The system here,” he said, “is to start from the beginning, to learn how things are.” “Alright, I’ll start from the beginning,” I said, “It’s a good place to start always.” So I start from the beginning, and became, I became a waiter. The club, the name of the club was the Standard Club, the Standard Club. So I started, they gave me my station there, tables where I had to serve and I was very happy there. And often my clientele was quite, quite happy, because I knew somehow how to serve, one thing, and second, I had an accent, which was <*laughing*> qu-qu-quite an important-

I: Attribute.

EP: Of course. So there I earned so much money that it took me afterwards, when I got the job as a professor at Wayne State University, it took me from two years to make so much money every month, you know.

I: Was that because of the tips?

EP: Tips, the tips were offered to me in an envelope and very, very discreetly. Not to, to offend me of course, or something. It was very good. And I had all the advantages, let's say, of sometimes in Greece, we have maids in houses that had, that have always some relative whom they always bring when the house lady has something, some affair, some <*unintelligible {180}*> or something like this, you know. So this time, by this time, I have met Beata and I used to, to show her how good a Jewish wedding is, and I used to date her and put her up on a box, let's say, like a fiddle box up there, to see what the whole thing, what happens there. And of course, afterwards, I had the flowers of the tables, which I collected of course. I had the-to put in order in the dining room. And so I wasn't smart. I thought it was very funny, the whole thing, so—

I: So how many years were you there?

EP: Oh, I was three years, I think.

I: Did they just hire men? Or did they have women waiters too?

EP: Only women—Er, only men. Only men.

I: Only men. Right. Because I know Beata had worked somewhere.

EP: In the International House. Where the cool guys used to work <*laughs*>. Well, anyway. This is the way I started, you know, my careers. I—There are a lot of changes. I would always have a couple of jobs at the same time. I taught the Greek school in time, I did private lessons in the meantime. I had various other occupations, let's say.

I: Which one of these part-time occupations did you like the best?

EP: <*laughs*> Well, to tell you the truth from the point of view of having the sense, the feeling that you are fulfilling something, when I was teaching Greek school, believe it or not. This is <*unintelligible {206}*> because it is just not Greek school, but it was very good. These kids did not know Greek, really at all. One or two words, and not always the best words, you know. But I used to teach them. And they still remember me, yes.

I: How are you feeling Nondas?

EP: Oh, very tired. This is terrible altogether.

I: <*unintelligible {212}*>

<*tape cuts off {213}*>

END OF INTERVIEW